

## Should trash be an export item?

### Councillor Brad Duguid, City of Toronto

Canada's current and future prosperity is closely tied to its ability to conduct trade. We are a trading nation and our most important trading partner is the United States. For Ontario, that means Michigan is our principal trading partner.

Our historic trading relationship has been strengthened through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Under NAFTA, trade has increased and branched out to include residual wastes. This has sparked the question "Why is Toronto exporting its waste to Michigan?"

The answer can be found in the development of infrastructure within Michigan and Ontario to manage wastes. Michigan has built substantive landfill infrastructure that has been marketed in Ontario by U.S. companies at competitive or superior prices and with built-in flexibility to divert waste from landfills without financial penalty.

### U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Michigan

The question I've been asked to address is: "Should trash be an export item?"

The answer, by both treaty and common sense, is yes. But within reason.

Within the Great Lakes region already, many tons of waste are shipped across state and international borders. For example, in 2002, Michigan exported 44,000 tons of waste – mostly combustible fuels for incineration – to Canada. That same year, Ontario exported about 2 million tons of municipal solid waste to Michigan. And since Toronto closed its remaining landfill in January, another 350,000 tons are coming our way.

That's 180 trucks a day coming from Canada to Michigan, versus about six a day from Michigan to Canada – 30 times the traffic.

States and provinces have responsibilities to build infrastructure to support their populations' needs. That includes constructing landfills.

Michiganians are puzzled that in all of Ontario – a province of 415,000 square miles, roughly four times the size of Michigan – not one site is

Alternatively, Ontario has built substantive hazardous waste treatment infrastructure that has been marketed in the United States. In 2001, 61,000 tons of hazardous waste were shipped from Michigan to Ontario for disposal or recycling. In short, our trading relationship is two-way and works to the benefit of both partners.

However, we are sensitive and responsive to concerns. To address the waste export issue, Toronto created "Task Force 2010" to achieve 100 percent diversion from landfill by 2010. This has resulted in new initiatives such as the "Green Bin" program to collect and compost kitchen leftovers and the commencement of a proposal call for new and emerging technologies to enable us to manage more waste in our own backyard.

As a result, Toronto is fast becoming a North American leader in recycling and composting and is determined to find alternatives to export.

suitable for a landfill.

This situation places a hidden tax and unfair infrastructure and public health burdens on Michigan. At this rate, Michigan's landfills will fill up years ahead of schedule, forcing the state to spend money converting its green spaces to waste storage.

I have introduced a bill in the U. S. Senate that would place a temporary ban on the importation of Canadian waste until the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) begins enforcing our treaty with Canada that requires advance notification of waste shipments and gives a state – or province – the chance to object.

I am also sponsoring an online petition drive that urges EPA to use its authority and enforce this treaty now. More than 75,000 have signed the petition at [stabenow.senate.gov](http://stabenow.senate.gov)

Waste exports should be a matter of agreed upon economic efficiency, not willingness to invest in needed landfill infrastructure.

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counterpoint



Sen. Debbie Stabenow